



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Mountain Lane C.P School
Knowle Lane
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 3JA**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Mountain Lane Primary School serves a large catchment area near the town of Buckley in Flintshire, North Wales.

There are 452 pupils aged three to 11 years in the school. Pupils are organised into 14 single age group classes and one additional nursery class of 58 part-time children. The school describes most of the area it serves as advantaged with around a quarter neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. All pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Approximately 9% of pupils are entitled to free schools meals, which is well below the all-Wales average. The school has identified 14% of pupils with additional learning needs and no pupils receive a statement of special educational needs. There has been one fixed-term exclusion in the last 12 months.

The school has achieved The Basic Skills Quality Standard, a Silver Green Flag eco-schools award and the Investors in People Standard.

Since the last inspection in 2005, the senior leadership of the school has changed with a new headteacher and deputy-headteacher joining the staff.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Mountain Lane School is £2,697, which compares with a maximum of £7,635 and a minimum of £2,660 for primary schools in Flintshire. The school has the 2nd lowest budget per pupil out of the 74 primary schools in Flintshire.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of Mountain Lane Primary School is good because:

- it provides a broad, balanced, topical and relevant curriculum;
- standards of achievement are consistently good throughout the school;
- standards in wellbeing are excellent; and
- the quality of teaching and assessment is good.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Mountain Lane Primary School are good because:

- the headteacher, leadership team and governors are successful in developing a shared vision for the school;
- there is a thorough process for self-evaluation using a wide and appropriate range of first-hand evidence; and
- there is strong teamwork.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 ensure that the attainment of pupils is accurately recorded at the end of the key stages;
- R2 develop further the use of the outdoor environment in the Foundation Phase;
- R3 ensure that the Governors' Annual Report to parents includes all the statutory information; and
- R4 strengthen the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating standards and quality.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Standards of achievement are consistently good at both key stages with the majority of pupils making good progress and achieving well during their time in school. In the lessons observed and from the scrutiny of their work, there is significant evidence that pupils generally achieve and attain better than the end of key stage data indicates. Targets for 2011 point towards a significant improvement on recent years.

Most of the more able pupils make good progress. Pupils with additional and special educational needs make good progress and achieve well according to their age and ability. Pupils entitled to free school meals also make good progress.

Most pupils make good progress in their communication skills across all areas of the curriculum. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and respond promptly and correctly to instructions. Most pupils speak fluently and many older pupils write extensively and creatively for a range of purposes. Most pupils read well and use their reading and writing skills effectively to access a varied range of tasks.

Pupils' attitudes to Wales and learning Welsh are generally positive. The bilingual and Welsh language skills of the majority of pupils are developing well. Many older pupils read confidently and with expression. They hold simple conversations in Welsh and answer straightforward questions appropriately. The majority of pupils show increasing confidence with their writing skills.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance in the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, has been variable over the last four years when compared with that of other similar schools. In key stage 2, pupils' performance improved in 2010 and it is now in the third quarter when compared with that of other similar schools.

In key stage 1, 80% of pupils in 2010 achieved the core subject indicator. This performance is above the local authority average and about the same as the Wales average. However, it does not compare as well with the performance of other similar schools. In English and mathematics, the performance of pupils is lower than the family average, as is the percentage of pupils in 2010 that attained the higher level (level 3) in English.

In key stage 1, pupils perform well in science. Their performance is in the top quarter and amongst the best in the family. However, the school does not compare well with other similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher level (level 3) in science.

In key stage 2, 85% of pupils in 2010 achieved the core subject indicator. This is almost a 10% improvement on the previous year and is above the local authority and

Wales average but slightly below the family average. In English, mathematics and science, pupils' performance at the higher level (level 5) does not compare as well.

Overall, boys do not achieve as well as girls and, in key stage 2 in 2010, almost a third fewer boys than girls achieved the expected level in English. However, there was no evidence in the lessons observed that this is currently true.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Standards in wellbeing are excellent. Almost all pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. All pupils take part in physical activity called 'Wake-up Shake-up' after the lunch break and this successfully prepares them for the afternoon session. This activity has a very positive impact on pupils' concentration and learning in the afternoon and is an exceptional feature.

Attendance has been consistent over the last three years and, at almost 95%, compares favourably with that of similar schools across Wales. Behaviour of pupils is often exemplary and all are polite, sociable and courteous to staff, visitors and each other. All pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they are free from bullying. All pupils show respect, care and concern for their friends and work well with one another. As a result, almost all pupils are highly motivated and show very positive attitudes and enthusiasm towards learning.

The school council, eco, charity and entrepreneur committees are extremely effective at including pupils' views in school decision-making. Pupils are confident in these roles and, in particular, the charity committee works in an innovative way. This pupil committee is very successful in deciding how they raise money and about how they select charities that will benefit from their support. This represents a high level of skill in decision-making.

Pupils demonstrate a great pride in the school. This is illustrated through their exemplary compliance in wearing the school uniform and PE kit.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad, balanced, topical and relevant curriculum. Most teachers provide a good range of stimulating learning experiences that contribute significantly to pupils' understanding and enjoyment in learning. However, the use of the outdoor learning environment for Foundation Phase children has not yet been fully developed. The school's provision is enhanced significantly by a comprehensive and stimulating range of extra-curricular activities, for example the school choir, chess, ICT club and sporting activities. These are very well attended by pupils.

Pupils are provided with good opportunities throughout the school for developing their reading, writing, speaking and listening and thinking skills. Well-planned and relevant activities ensure that pupils apply these skills effectively across the curriculum. Good opportunities also exist across the school to develop pupils' personal and social skills.

The school has an effective and enthusiastic eco-committee that co-ordinates a range of relevant activities within and beyond the school. For instance, they organise the termly "Earth Hour" which helps all pupils deepen their knowledge of a range of environmental issues. The committee also encourages and monitors the actions of staff and pupils in recycling paper, saving energy and reducing photocopying. The school's participation in "World Week", and pupils' frequent involvement with charity work, enhances their understanding of the lifestyles and cultures of people in many other countries.

Provision for Welsh development is good. The school provides staff with appropriate support in order to improve the provision for Welsh language development across the school. This includes working with the Athrawes Fro and a Welsh teacher from the local secondary school. This is having a positive impact on standards.

A successful feature of the school is the provision of a relevant range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and the general life of Welsh people. This includes pupils taking part in Welsh themed assemblies, Welsh themed lunches, visits to places of interest such as Erddig, Chirk Castle and Snowdonia and studying the work of Welsh artists such as Kyffin Williams.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good and includes some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers demonstrate up-to-date subject knowledge. Overall, teachers and support staff have a good understanding of the curriculum and collaborate well to support pupils' learning.

The format of lesson planning supports the development of pupils' skills and their progress effectively. Most lessons proceed at a lively pace and teachers use a good range of strategies and resources well. In many lessons, work is well matched to the range of pupils' abilities and, as a result, the work for many pupils is appropriately challenging. There are extremely positive working relationships between pupils and all adults.

Assessment for learning is developing well across the school and there are elements of very good practice, especially in key stage 2. All teachers ensure that pupils are fully aware of the lesson learning objectives and success criteria. They encourage and enable pupils to assess and evaluate their own work and that of other pupils and to set their own targets for improvement. Teachers provide very good feedback to pupils and this helps them understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Most teachers are highly skilled at questioning and this extends pupils' understanding effectively.

The school takes an active part in cluster arrangements for assessment and moderation at the end of key stage 2. However, in spite of these arrangements, teachers' assessments do not always reflect accurately the high levels of pupils' achievements.

Reports to parents are detailed and informative, and indicate areas for further improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils and parents value highly the school's safe and caring environment.

Effective arrangements exist to support pupils' health and wellbeing and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for after-lunch exercise effectively prepares pupils for their work in the afternoon. A positive ethos of respect in the school is reflected well in standards of pupils' behaviour and relationships between adults and pupils.

The school provides well-planned, targeted support and guidance for pupils with additional learning needs. Their progress is assessed regularly and the information is used effectively to provide further support, as needed. The support for these pupils is managed and co-ordinated efficiently and includes appropriate deployment of support staff. The school also uses the services of external agencies well.

Well planned literacy and numeracy programmes, individual support for pupils and the effective adaptation of tasks and activities also contribute towards raising standards in English, mathematics and the basic skills.

The school has identified pupils who are more able and talented and staff work well to develop and implement strategies to challenge these pupils further.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The accommodation is generally of good quality and the buildings are used well to support pupils' learning. Displays are attractive and enhance the positive ethos in the building. These also provide clear evidence of the pupils' contribution to school life.

The school has a calm and welcoming ethos that generally provides pupils with a safe and supportive learning environment. Parents, staff and pupils are proud to be associated with Mountain Lane Primary School. They appreciate the strong sense of care, inclusion and belonging that exists. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and participate fully in the life of the school.

The outside areas of the school such as the wooded area, garden and outdoor classroom provide valuable teaching resources. However, provision for outdoor learning is not consistent enough throughout the Foundation Phase.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher, leadership team and governors are successful in developing a shared vision for the school based on the school motto 'Learn to live. Live to Learn'.

The headteacher provides clear leadership and has high expectations. These, together with her open style of management, add to a very good whole-school ethos. This promotes improvements in provision and standards well. Effective leadership team meetings, staff meetings and a sound performance management structure are successful in improving learning and teaching.

Governors support the school conscientiously and are directly involved in writing the Governors' Annual Report. There are, however, a few omissions from the required content of this. They challenge the school when necessary and generally know about the initiatives the school is developing through, for example, the introduction of 'learning walks'. However, governors are not involved directly enough in the school's self-evaluation processes and planning procedures to secure the necessary improvements.

The school is making good progress in introducing initiatives that meet local and national priorities such as the Foundation Phase, Assessment for Learning, the development of thinking skills and healthy schools. These initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

There is a thorough process for self-evaluation using a wide and appropriate range of first-hand evidence. This evidence includes the performance of pupils, observations of staff, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of parents. Pupils also make a very valued contribution to the self-evaluation process through the comprehensive 'Pupil Voice' strategy which includes the use of pupil questionnaires and a wide range of relevant pupil committees. In addition, the school also refers to a number of reviews of its work undertaken by the local authority.

The outcomes of the self-evaluation process are used to determine appropriate priorities for school improvement. These are contained in departmental plans and a clear, whole school summary of priorities. However, the school's three-year development plan is too detailed and, as a result, the priorities for school improvement are, on a few occasions, not clear enough. Nevertheless, implementation of the plan is generally having a positive impact on provision and standards in the school.

The school is developing as an effective learning community with a strong culture of collaboration and teamwork within the school. There are a number of professional learning communities within the school that are having a positive impact on standards, for example Assessment for Learning and thinking skills. Staff also collaborate well with other schools to improve their professional knowledge.

Partnership working: Good

The school has effective partnerships with parents, many of whom regularly help with school activities such as information and communication technology, swimming lessons, school visits, and listening to pupils read. Many parents appreciate the fact that the school arranges specific evenings in order to inform them of the content and any changes to the curriculum.

The school works successfully in partnership with a range of agencies including the local authority, the behaviour support service, the school nurse and the police school liaison officer. The school also has effective partnerships with the local community such as the local library, church, care homes, Theatr Clwyd and Powergen. Members of the community are welcomed into the school and often enhance the curriculum by sharing their experiences with pupils. There are effective links with other local schools where members of staff have visited in order to view good practice. These partnerships are successful in enriching and supporting all pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Parents and carers speak highly of the valuable arrangements made for pupils joining the school. The school has effective links with local nurseries, which ensure that new children settle in well. Transition plans, agreed by the two local secondary schools and their feeder primary schools are excellent and prepare older pupils very well for the next stage of their education. These links also enable pupils to use resources in the secondary schools and ensure that staff have opportunities to discuss matters relating to standards with other local teachers.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its finances very well. Spending decisions are clearly linked to priorities for improvement. There is a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff and these are deployed effectively. The school identifies and meets the needs of all staff through effective performance management procedures.

The school accommodation is very well ordered and managed. There is generally a good range of learning resources with book resources recently given a high priority. These are managed and used well. There are very good arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. These and the provision of leadership time meet the needs of the school effectively.

The management of the school is cost effective and efficient. In view of the good progress made by most pupils, the high level of care, support and guidance provided, the efficient use of funding and the wide range of resources, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Well over a hundred questionnaires were received from parents. Overall, they express a great deal of satisfaction with the school. All parents feel that it is well run and they make very positive comments about its work.

Nearly all parents state that their children were helped to settle into school when they first started. Nearly all parents also feel that their children like school and are happy and safe there and most feel that children behave well. All parents also feel that teaching is good and children are expected to work hard. As a result, nearly all parents state that their children are making good progress, are becoming more mature and taking on responsibilities, and are encouraged to be healthy. Many parents feel that there is a good range of activities in school and that the homework given is appropriate. Many parents state that children receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs and most feel that children are treated fairly and with respect.

Nearly all parents state that school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions but a few do not feel that they are well enough informed about their children's progress. Also, a few parents are not sure about whether their children are well prepared for moving on to their next school. Many parents are clear about what to do if they need to raise issues with the school or to make a complaint.

Responses to learner questionnaires

All pupils feel safe in school and nearly all know whom to talk to when they are worried or upset. All pupils also feel that they are doing well at school and agree that the teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress. If pupils find their work hard, they know whom to ask, and most pupils feel that homework helps them to better understand and improve on their work. Most pupils agree that the school helps them to live healthy lifestyles and feel that they have many opportunities in school to get regular exercise. Nearly all pupils believe there are enough resources to enable them to learn well. Most pupils think that pupils' behaviour is generally good in the school but a few feel that the behaviour of some pupils during the playtimes and lunchtimes could be improved. Nearly all pupils feel that any instances of bullying are dealt with well by school staff.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mike Maguire	Reporting Inspector
Iwan Roberts	Team Inspector
Eleanor Davies	Team Inspector
Andrew Brazier	Lay Inspector
Julie Buckley Jones	Peer Inspector
Kevin Downes (Deputy Head)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11